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Jocelyn Dressel, OTS

Thomas Jefferson University, jocelyn.dressel@gmail.com

Erin Shervinskie, OTS

Thomas Jefferson University, erinshervinskie@gmail.com

Lauren Yaker, OTS

Thomas Jefferson University, lauren.yaker@gmail.com

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DiverseOT: Increasing diversity within the field of Occupational Therapy

Jocelyn Dressel, OTS; Erin Shervinskis, OTS; Lauren Yaker, OTS

Mentor: E. Adel Herge OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Master of Science in Occupational Therapy degree at Thomas Jefferson University

Objectives of Presentation: At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the need to increase diversity among occupational therapy professionals
2. Recognize the impact of the absence of diversity within health professions
3. Discuss strategies utilized by other health professions to increase diversity in their student and professional workforce
4. Analyze and adapt effective strategies to increase diversity in the occupational therapy workforce

PICO: What are effective strategies to increase diversity among OT students in order to create a diverse workforce?

Methods:

- Databases: CINAHL, PubMed, and Scopus
- Search Terms: P: occupational therap*, allied health, medical student*, nurs* student*, allied health student*, occupational, therapy student*, physical therapy student*, dent* student*; I: minority recruitment, program development, recruit*; O: divers*, minorit*, cultural, workforce
- 216 articles found through database search; 202 articles excluded; 14 articles included in final synthesis

Results:

Main themes established from the 14 articles:

| Recruitment | Retention | Transition Into Profession |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Special courses- 11/14 | Tutoring- 2/14 | Boards Prep- 2/14 |
| Financial- 6/14 | Financial- 3/14 | |
| Mentoring- 9/14 | Mentoring- 4/14 | |
| Infrastructures- 7/14 | Infrastructures- 4/14 | |
| Pipeline- 4/14 | Pipeline- 1/14 | |

Outcome Measures

- Enrollment rates
- Graduation rates
- Attrition rates
- Board first and second time pass rates

Major Implications

- Education
 - Establish campus-wide initiatives tailored to the strengths and capacities of the academic institution
 - Implement mandatory mentoring programs
 - Evaluate cost/benefit ratio of program initiation
- Practitioners
 - Build partnership with academic institution
 - Provide guidance, role modeling and leadership development to students
 - Accept students for rotations within underserved areas
- Research
 - Discover barriers for recruiting and retaining diverse populations in occupational therapy
 - Determine effective strategies used in other professions to increase gender diversity
 - Examine the cost of implementing a program to increase diversity

Effective Strategies

- Implement Pipeline programs
- Utilize a combination of techniques to enhance diversity when no established Pipeline program in place
- Increase diversity within faculty and administration personnel
- Establish supportive mentoring programs for both faculty and students
- Provide financial support through grants, stipends, financial aid and scholarship
- Promote participation in pre-professional clubs

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Contact Information: Jocelyn Dressel, OTS (Jocelyn.Dressel@gmail.com)